

What is claimed is:

1. A flexible heat and pressure consolidated laminate, comprising in superimposed relationship:
 - a flexible backing layer containing a polyester impregnated sheet;
 - a decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material;
 - wherein said layers have been exposed, simultaneously, to temperature between 110° C and 250° C and pressure between 100 PSI and 450 PSI.
2. The flexible heat and pressure consolidated laminate of claim 1 further comprising a flexible overlay bonded to said decorative layer.
3. The flexible heat and pressure consolidated laminate of claim 2 wherein said flexible overlay consists of at least one sheet of alpha cellulose paper impregnated with a resin that remains substantially flexible after curing.
4. The flexible heat and pressure consolidated laminate of claim 1 wherein said leather material is bonded leather with a sheet thickness in the range of from about .2 mm to about 4 mm.

5. A flexible heat and pressure consolidated laminate, comprising in superimposed relationship:
- a flexible backing layer containing a polyester impregnated sheet;
 - a decorative layer consisting essentially of a leather material, said leather material is bonded leather with a sheet thickness in the range of from about .2 mm to about 4 mm; and
 - a flexible overlay bonded to said decorative layer, said flexible overlay consists of at least one sheet of alpha cellulose paper impregnated with a resin that remains substantially flexible after curing;
- wherein said layers have been exposed, simultaneously, to temperature between 110° C and 250° C and pressure between 100 PSI and 450 PSI.
6. A method for the production of a flexible heat and pressure consolidated leather laminate comprising the steps of:
- stacking in a superimposed relationship a flexible backing layer, a decorative layer comprised essentially of leather, and a release sheet;
 - inserting the stacked layers between plates of a thermosetting press;
 - raising the pressure of the thermosetting press to a predetermined pressure;
 - raising the temperature of the thermosetting press to a predetermined temperature;
 - maintaining the stacked layers in the heated, pressurized thermosetting press for a period of time sufficient to form a laminate from said layers;
 - removing the laminate from the thermosetting press; and
 - removing the release sheet from the laminate.
7. The method of claim 6, wherein said predetermined temperature ranges from about 110° C to about 250° C.
8. The method of claim 6, wherein said predetermined pressure ranges from about 100 PSI to about 450 PSI.
9. The method of claim 6, wherein said period of time sufficient to form a laminate ranges from about 20 seconds to about 150 seconds.

10. The method of claim 6, wherein said release sheet is textured to impart an embossed texture on the decorative layer.

11. A method for the production of a flexible heat and pressure consolidated leather laminate comprising the steps of:

setting the temperature of said continuous thermosetting press to a predetermined temperature;

setting the pressure of said continuous thermosetting press to a predetermined pressure;

feeding in a superimposed relationship a flexible backing layer, a decorative layer comprised essentially of leather, and a release sheet into a continuous thermosetting press, said flexible backing layer, decorative layer and release sheet being fed into the continuous thermosetting press from a location upstream from said press;

maintaining the superimposed layers in the heated, pressurized continuous thermosetting press for a period of time sufficient to form a laminate from said layers; and

removing the release sheet from the laminate as it exits the press.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of transporting the flexible leather laminate to handling equipment located downstream from said continuous thermosetting press for further processing.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein said predetermined temperature ranges from about 110° C to about 250° C.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein said predetermined pressure ranges from about 100 PSI to about 450 PSI.

15. The method of claim 11 wherein said flexible backing layer, decorative layer comprised essentially of leather, and release sheet are fed into the continuous thermosetting press from continuous webs located upstream from said continuous thermosetting press.

16. A method for the production of a flexible heat and pressure consolidated leather laminate comprising the steps of:

setting the temperature of said continuous thermosetting press to a predetermined temperature, said predetermined temperature ranging from about 110° C to about 250° C;

setting the pressure of said continuous thermosetting press to a predetermined pressure, wherein said predetermined pressure ranges from about 100 PSI to about 450 PSI;

feeding in a superimposed relationship a flexible backing layer, a decorative layer comprised essentially of leather, and a release sheet into a continuous thermosetting press from continuous webs located upstream from said continuous thermosetting press;

selecting a line speed of the continuous thermosetting press that allows the superimposed layers to remain in the heated, pressurized press for a period of time sufficient to form a flexible laminate from said layers; and

removing the release sheet from the laminate as it exits the press.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein said line speed is about 60 feet per minute.

18. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of transporting the flexible leather laminate to handling equipment located downstream from said continuous thermosetting press for further processing.

19. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of affixing the flexible leather laminate to a substrate having non-uniform surface features through a thermal bonding process such that the flexible leather laminate conforms to the non-uniform surface features of the substrate.